



National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet

What is the School Lunch Program?

The National School Lunch Program is a federally assisted meal program operating in over 101,000 public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions.

Participating school districts and independent schools get receive cash subsidies and donated foods from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for each meal they serve.

The lunches must meet Federal requirements, including offering free or reduced-price lunches to low-income children. Schools are also reimbursed for snacks served in afterschool educational or enrichment programs.

Nutritional Requirements



School lunches must meet the applicable recommendations of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans such as limiting calories from fat. Lunches must also provide one-third of the Recommended Dietary Allowances for certain key nutrients. While school lunches must meet Federal requirements, decisions about what specific foods to serve and how they are prepared are made locally. USDA offers training and technical assistance to help schools prepare healthful meals, and provides nutrition education to help children understand the link between diet and health.

Qualifications

Any child at a participating school may purchase lunches. However, children from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty level are eligible for free meals. Those with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for reduced-price meals. For the period July 1, 2009 -June 30, 2010, the income limit for a free meal is \$28,665 for a family of four and \$40,793 for a reduced-price meal. Local schools set their own prices for full-price meals but must operate a nonprofit lunch program. Snacks are offered at no charge if they operate in areas where at least 50 percent of children are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

Reimbursements

The current (July 1, 2010 through June 30, 2011) maximum cash reimbursement rates are:

Free lunch \$3.37

Reduced price lunch \$2.97

Paid lunch \$0.34

In addition to cash reimbursements, schools are entitled to receive USDA commodities at a value of 19.5 cents for each meal served in School Year 2009-2010. Schools can also get "bonus" commodities if available from agricultural surplus.

For more information visit:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch>

